

**Between the city and the river
Architecture of urban relations**

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OC - Open City
INTERNATIONAL
SUMMER SCHOOL
Piacenza 2010
from landscape to exterior design

BETWEEN THE CITY AND THE RIVER
ARCHITECTURE OF URBAN RELATIONS

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PROJECTS

Between the city and the river: architecture of urban relations

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PIACENZA TERRITORIAL NODE A STRATEGY FOR TWO "OBJECTS"

*Synthesis of the lecture held in Piacenza OC Summer School (September, 14th 2010)
Speakers: Federico Oliva, Paola Pucci*

Paola Pucci

Piacenza is a city crossed by several mobile populations that use the infrastructure system, according to diversified rhythms and ways¹.

Piacenza is served by high-performance networks of infrastructures (A1 and A21 highways, railway lines), that constitute a multimodal corridor, surrounding the northern of the town, along the river Po, creating enclaves and "islands" that reduce the city to a functional assembly of interchangeable parts. These conditions – heterogeneous mobile practices and large infrastructures as separate place for flow, with specific links with the surroundings, arising from the application of technical laws and constraints – suggest to implement strategies finalized to networking infrastructures and places.

This is a strategy to create links between different "islands", that organize the urban settlement, but also to decline large infrastructures – existing and in project – as a response to the local mobility too, trying to avoid that accessibility a few important places will result in the creation of infrastructure, impervious to the territory. This is a premise to make Piacenza a territorial node, because the integration between short nets and long nets is the way with which organize the polycentric urban structure of Piacenza as a dynamic system of scales, given the opportunity to different mobile populations of choosing among alternative forms of available mobility which can offer the greatest flexibility, range of connections, reversibility and the best means of accessing the various resources and destinations possible, so as to provide persons with the chance to develop their own personal projects as well as to ensure equity and the "right of movement". The key factor for formulating policies finalized to organize the urban polycentric structure as a dynamic system of scales, in respect of the sustainable mobility is that of accessibility policies, because accessibility includes both qualities of the transport system as well as characteristics of land use patterns (density, functional mix, quality of the public spaces) and the mobility demand at the micro_meso_macro scales.

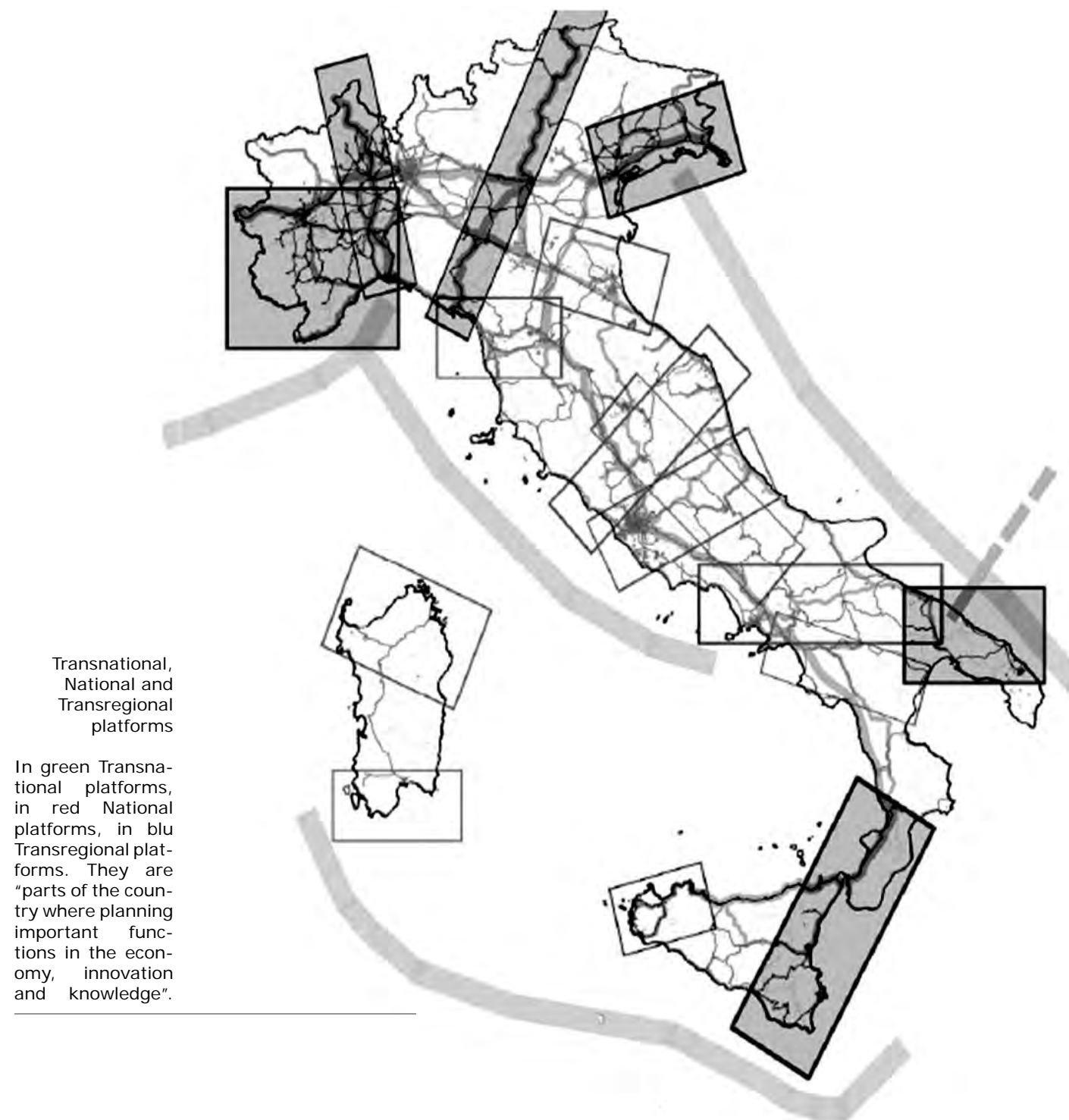
Accessibility is strongly connected with the urban development patterns: accessibility refers to the increasing access to resources that people get through improvements in the transport system; it can expect and support policies for equal opportunities for the different mobile populations; it can help in planning the evolution of the urban structure, generating new opportunities for human interaction; it can help articulate urban planning and design strategies, protecting conservation and natural areas from urbanisation. According to this perspective, three integrated territorial scales emerge to decline the accessibility policies in the organization of Piacenza as a territorial node:

- *Macro scale as International accessibility*,
as the access to long distances and global networks;
- *Meso scale as Regional accessibility*,
as the access to Piacenza city town and nearest municipal districts to Milan Urban Region as well as to main districts of Emilia Romagna, Liguria and Piemonte Regions;
- *Micro scale as local accessibility*,
as "place-making", constituted through the quality of local connections and mixing uses in local districts, as performed and practiced places in which pedestrian scale identifies the dynamic quality of the near-places.

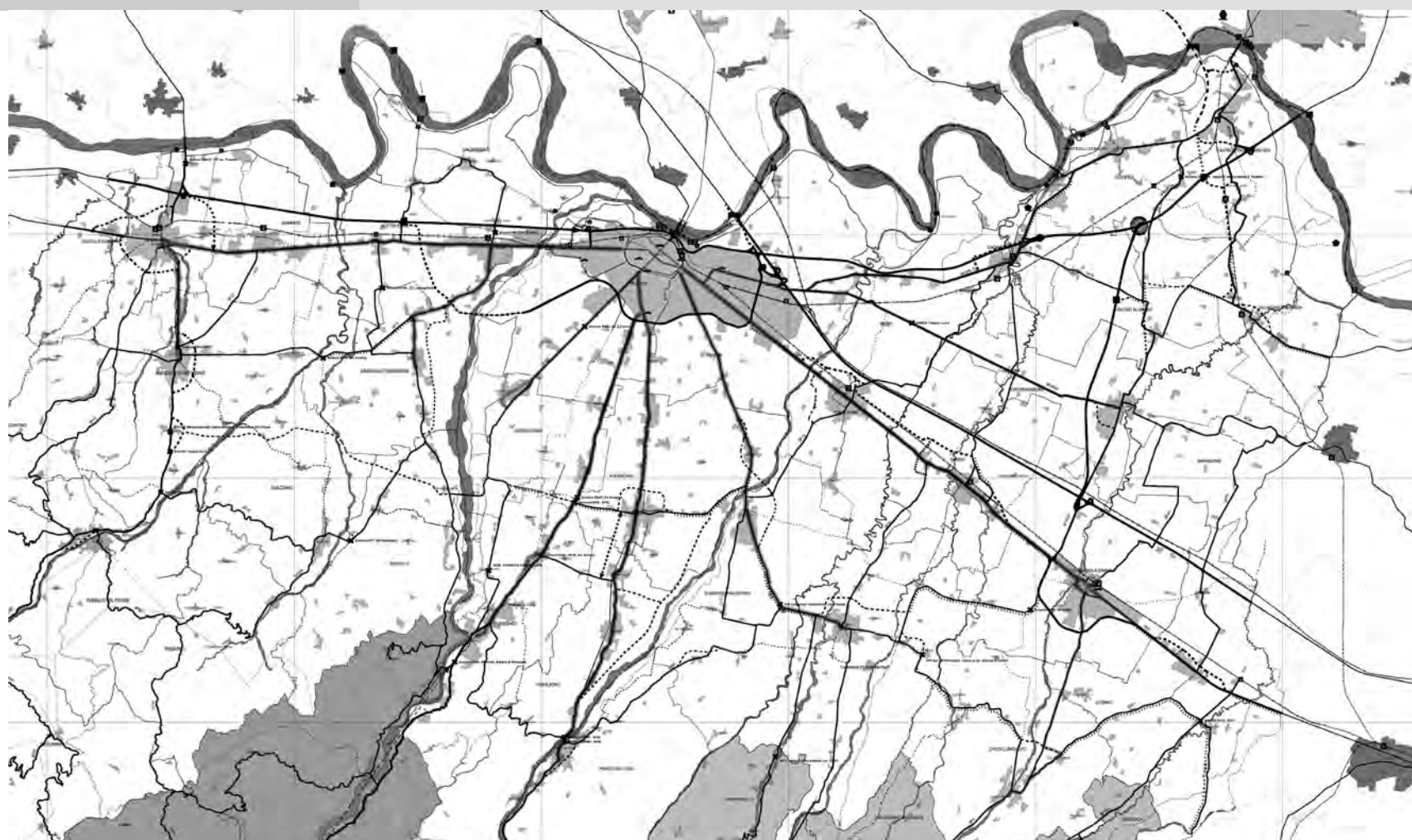
1. Inter-connecting Macro_Meso_Micro Scales

Macro_Meso_Micro are spatial scales, but also design/project strategies, capable of holding together the properties of mobility networks as places in which the multimodal interconnection re-defines the metric scale and the relationships of urban context: the "far-near" couple no more represents a space parameter, but now refers to how long it takes to reach a chosen destination.

Macro_Meso_Micro can work together if the multimodal interconnection of Piacenza strengthens, as a condition for enlarging the basin of attraction and supporting functional territorial programs (that must have market and they are a driving force for the local economy), extending the potential users of goods and improving the quality of services in the city and its province.



CONTRIBUTIONS Piacenza territorial node. A strategy for two "objects"



Institutional strategies: the infrastructure projects in provincia of Piacenza

Among the infrastructure projects: the extension of Cispadana road (as required by Prit); the integrated logistics platform and business centre "Piacenza Intermodale SpA"; the construction of a new bridge over the Po in the east quadrant of Piacenza Reorganization of the roads in Castelvetro area with new bridge over the Po; the Port River with new basin of Isola Serafini as a preliminary step to "Corridoio integrato del Po".

1.1. Macro scale

Macro scale as international accessibility, as the access to long distances and global networks is linked to the connection with TEN corridors – Trans European Networks – as Corridor 5, “Corridoio dei due mari” and “Asse TI.BRE) - to ensure quality in the transport services and links, necessary to the competitiveness of Piacenza. Since Piacenza is not directly affected by a TEN corridor, for this scale it becomes important to prevent a possible disadvantage in competitive positioning of Piacenza than near cities located on Ten Corridors (ie Alessandria and Parma).

Among the strategies to improve connections with the large infrastructure networks, integrating local nets with long nets, it becomes necessary to construct a coherent spatial framework, giving priority to certain infrastructures, planning in Regional and Provincial plans², optimizing limited resources.

In a context of scarce funding and lack of consensus on the implementation of some infrastructure projects, it requires a careful assessment of priorities to be established for carrying out some works which must ensure the efficient access to global networks as a goal for the increasingly knowledge based and often advanced industry to stay competitive, but also to be able to provide a good quality of life for the inhabitants while still offering. As acknowledged, an efficient network for transport is a key means for providing a big enough market potential allowing for a diversified economic structure and labour market, necessary for providing business services with a high degree of specialisation.

1.2. Meso scale

Meso as Regional accessibility is linked to important attractiveness of Piacenza, especially for the Apennines centers (Val Trebbia and Val Nure), and along the Padania inferiore road. The main goal in the regional accessibility is to assure the long distance accessibility diffusion to larger landlocked areas, through an integrated and interconnected networks, so also relieve some very congested roads.

It is a question of developing an integrated mobility network to respond to programs of different populations, with the aim to facilitate the use of non-motorized modes and public transport, but also to improve the accessibility to global networks and to resolve congestion affecting some important roads. Analyzing the mobile practices in Piacenza district, it emerges a widened and dense use of the territories in which the new place's attractiveness emerge in the mobile practices.

With a reduction of travel-dependence from Milano for commuter flow, the attractiveness of Piacenza city town increases - although outflows are greater than inflows - specially in travels for school.

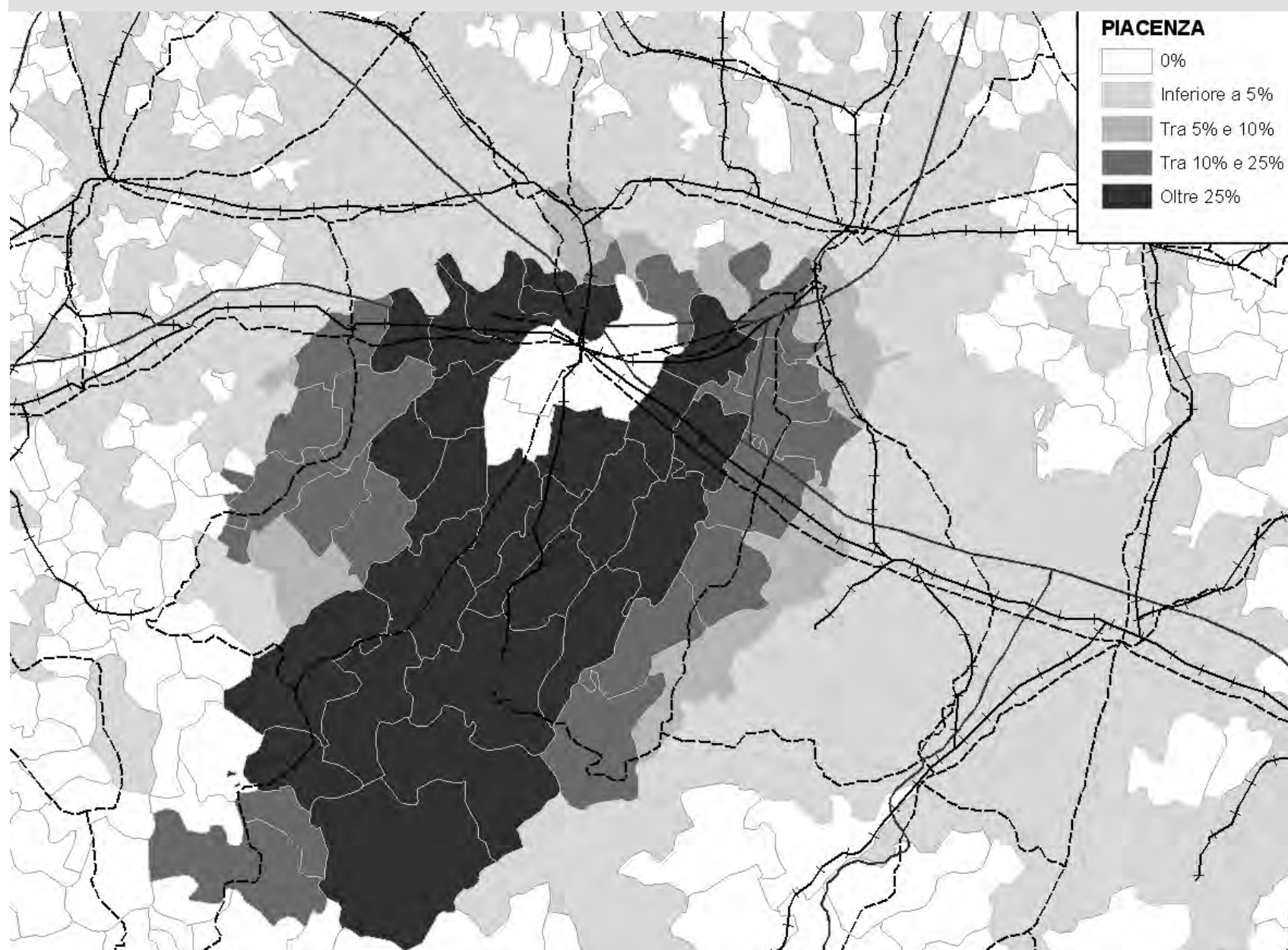
The multi-directional mobility intensifies and describes a complex network of the relationships: the transversal travels, that define a not hierarchical system of the relationships, grow and concern, above all, the most dynamic towns (Fiorenzuola, Fidenza, Monticelli d'Ongina, Borgonovo, Rottofreno, Podenzano). The chain of daily moves becomes more articulated; the daily rush hours are dilated, the mean time of displacement increase, partly also for the traffic congestion that it grows. Characterized from multiple travels and with a lot of directions on the move, this greater diversity in travel behaviour among a populations requires choices to be able to respond to weaknesses, related to a more intensive use of infrastructure, both to the new demands of mobility, linked to the more articulated mobile practices. Approached these issues, it means to network specialist areas, places of excellence, taking into account the institutional projects (Prit Regione Emilia Romagna, Ptcp Provincia di Piacenza) finalized to:

- Improving road connections to the main centers at province scale, through the construction of "Pedemontana road", solving congestion on the roads crossing the main urban centers, with new ring-road in Fiorenzuola and Pontenute, increasing the service capacity of radial connections with Piacenza, Realizing the ring-freeway in the north of Piacenza;
- Developing freights and people rail mobility with new rail services such a "servizio ferroviario metropolitano" (Castel San Giovanni- Piacenza-Castelvetro railway line and Castel San Giovanni- Piacenza- Fiorenzuola railway line) and improving transport intermodality;
- Improving telecommunications and wireless networks, with the aim to spread the availability of broadband connection in the whole province and particularly in the most disadvantaged areas of the Apennines.

1.3. Micro scale

Micro scale as local accessibility is linked to spatial proximity, to pedestrian scale - which allows people to interact in a variety of mostly unplanned ways - to perspective on place that will be from the inside out, declining with project solutions diversified, related to local urban contests.

Micro scale is a place-making (Friedmann, 2010), linked to opportunities to promote



An important attractiveness of Piacenza, especially for the Apennines centres (Val Trebbia and Val Nure), and along the Padania inferiore road
Ratio between the out-flows going to Piacenza and all commuter out-flows.

the restoration of spatial proximity, ensuring mix uses in the residential and work spaces, but also proposing a re-articulation of the roads hierarchy to spend as an opportunity to improve urban quality, permeability and legibility of local public spaces. Inclusiveness, performability, dynamic quality (Cresswell, 2004) become conditions need to hold for a shared spaces in a micro scale dimension of the project.

2. Working with two "objects"

Our attention is focused in the station district as a strategic place in which co-exist and intersect different spatial scales with which the project is faced. The station project and its neighborhood become a "close project", re-defining the metric scales: near-far are no longer associated with metrics parameters, but with the time to reach possible destinations. The "far" becomes a measurement of accessibility. Around these conditions, it is useful to work, trying to avoid the uncertain programs of urban development for the station district, based on generic functional mix (trade, business and commercial functions) and in some cases released by market demand, also for the presence in Piacenza of many derelict areas (military areas) that affect the feasibility of urban redevelopment programs that need to be able to generate added value for the city.

The privilege role played by the station district in development the territorial role of Piacenza confirms that the question is deeply rooted in the structural reality of ongoing change. It is precisely the new scales brought about by this change that have led today to a possible architectural design of these spaces, not only in relation to their connotative physical aspects, but also their characteristic social aspects and the dynamics of the people and flows that cross through them. The station district is characterized by the presence of heterogeneous materials and multiple spaces that can collaborate, in various ways, to strengthen the role of Piacenza as a territorial node:

- the in-between space, as a "space-opportunity" located between the highway and the railway lines to be seized, without making it a poor quality "planned void", or a junk-spaces, risen without any reason;
- the space between the deck of the highway and the ground, whose permeability becomes a significant design requirement to make porous an object that represents an important visual and physical barrier;

- "the station and the railway lines" as an "osmotic membrane" between areas with different speeds (the motorway, the railway station, the park along the Po), which will urban practices and different populations for long periods have accommodate, optimizing the different scales of displacement. Here is the pedestrian metric to score the design criteria: if the station is an area to live by the pedestrian, the neighborhood of the station will be designed with the attention to its pedestrian practicability;
- the production areas, characterized by the medium-sized industries and crafts in a fabric with a low quality of public spaces;
- the Po river and its banks, a place where it is possible slow down the pace, a place that gives meaning to the noise of the infrastructure corridor, of the station, of the city, a place where different time of the nature slips in the urbanized places and where can change the rhythm, for which the protection of agricultural and rural landscape is a condition to ensuring the quality of settlements in the project.

In order to guarantee a networking between the multiple layers that belong to a sequence of correlated and linked elements in the station district, there are two objects with which we can work:

- the station to rethinking as a multifunction pole in an integrated public spaces networks
- the motorway viaduct, to make this large infrastructure liveable and "porous".

To rethinking the station role as a multifunction pole in a public spaces networks, physical layout and typological distribution to crossing the railway barrier with a functional program to make the station a multiple inclusive place, they are two influential issues. The station, as an interconnected networks junction, can organize the urban district from a process of spatial enhancement of the infrastructures with typological solutions to link the different urban sectors and to cross the railway barrier: a bridge structure, a two-side station in which the node splitting from side to side railway lines, connected by underpasses/overpasses or a multi-levels node with squares that guarantee the articulation of links, are some possible solutions in the re-organization of the node as interface between networks and urban spaces, point of re-dialing of spatial fragmentation and focus of masterplan, aimed at constructing a multi-centred system, organized starting from railway station. The importance of topological relationships of the node with its urban area brings out elements of variability rather than aspects of continuity: the elements of discontinuity, the thresholds, the forms of interference between urban materials that characterize the district station. It will be the design of open spaces that can give structure to the urban fabric between the station and the Po river and the histor-

ic town on the other hand, by means of alternating plates of built and green rooms. Define sequences, through the threshold project helps to separate and make recognizable areas that work according to different scales, speed, time of use, and hosting different urban communities: the neighbourhood of the station and the thematic areas that function as plates that will establish itself as a integrated and complementary poles, the river Po and the linear park project as a system of green rooms, capable of creating porosity than the large longitudinal infrastructures dissecting this urban sector. The opportunity of the existing motorway viaduct to make liveable and "porous" is an important condition, like many international experiences show: from the viaducts as "roofs" in which new functions and new connections became into the "layer" between the ground and the deck (i.e. Avenida Montevideo in Oporto transformed into viaduct with Manuel de Solà Morales project), to viaducts as "inhabited bridges" (i.e. Nanterre, highway viaduct and Management of highway centre in O. Decq, C. Benoit project), or a viaducts with roundabouts equipped with functions and spaces (i.e. the slip road of Palaiseau as an urban connector, in the Alain Sarfatti and Daniel Lacombe, project), or designed as an opportunity to connecting urban districts (as the rehabilitation of Boulevard Périphérique in Paris). Increasing multimodal interconnection, the urban development program for this area will work to:

- Planning mixité in functions, activities and urban practices for the new station district
- Working on the space in-between, not only in front of the station, but also between the motorway bridge, the Po river, the railway line, the station, the city;
- Planning with modular units (station, services, industrial areas), connected by green rooms that mark out sequences, linked by pedestrian and cycle routes that meet in the station district;
- Governing a long time transformations process, with flexibility in the articulation of the program, with adaptability between infrastructures transformations and real estate transactions With new partnerships, to managing the process.

3. A single large project vs a collection of independent projects

A cross-cutting issue for a project that wants to avoid large and small additions juxtaposed, to identify and talk with the main driving force behind the project, whether this is community-led, private partnership, local or other public authority, finalizing their strategies to develop shared scenarios, improving the dis-

tract station project, is the most appropriate tool to manage a complex project. The station district program is a large project of urban transformation, with effects on the structure and form of the urban and regional context. It requires technical and management procedures, able to taking all policy design, project management and architectural design; it needs to be associated with strategic visions, necessary for the implementation of a long-term project. According to this perspective, the masterplan, as a multidisciplinary tool for a design process, can represent a development framework able to:

- Constructing images of the project to test the feasibility from processes of interaction and coordination between institutions with transparent rules;
- Offering visions for the future, because the program must have the ability to compete with changes in the long run, it must lose any ultimate value and build on the identification of scenarios of short, medium and long term;
- Exploring the re-scaling dimension of the project, to integrate Macro_Meso_Micro scale for the station district;
- Representing a "common working ground" for designers, planners and management experts.

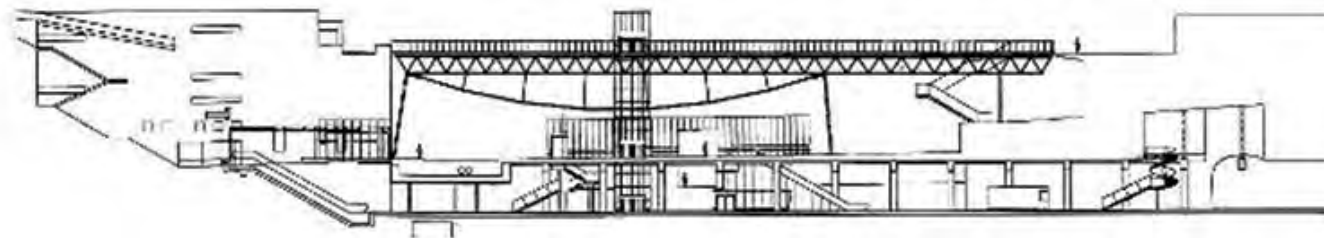
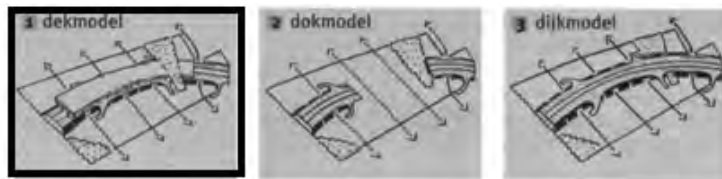
The masterplan manages a complex and long-term project, working at different spatial scales and with a full range of stakeholders, because it contains design simulation exercises (morphological and functional program), impact assessment, feasibility studies and while working procedures for the negotiation and coordination among the various players. Governing a long-time transformation process, two conditions for the project are necessary:

- adaptability, because infrastructures are independent of changes in real estate transactions; therefore we must guarantee the conditions need to hold for changing the components and the partnership in the program, conceived in terms not of 'functions' but of 'initiatives';
- continuity as construction of a shared vision of long-term project that constitutes a basic configuration, capable of driving the next actions that will occur in the medium to long times. This involves setting some rules that maintain the value of the project, while ensuring both flexibility and versatility in time.

In a multi-actor and multi-objective context, it is not enough to create value through a redistribution of land rent. It is necessary that the land value is a multidimensional shared value.

CONTRIBUTIONS *Piacenza territorial node. A strategy for two "objects"*

Bridge and multimodal junction: Flon Station in Losanna, (BTA + Merlini, 1995-2001)



NOTES

¹ Taking inspiration from the works of Urry (2000), Amin, Thrift (2002) and Le Breton (2006), we consider efficacy, describing the new mobile practices, the concept of "mobile communities", hence the "communities of practice" (Amin Thrift, 2002) defined as «groupes sociaux définis à partir de leurs inscriptions territoriales, de leurs pratiques de mobilité, des dispositifs techniques qu'ils mettent en oeuvre». (Le Breton, 2006, p. 26).

² Piano Territoriale di Coordinamento Provinciale (PTCP, 2009) of Piacenza and Piano Regionale Integrato dei Trasporti (PRIT) of Emilia Romagna Region, being updated.

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